

Testimony of Ardith Crampton  
Manager, Family Development Center, Nurturing Families Network  
Eastern Connecticut Health Network (Manchester Memorial, Rockville General Hospital)  
71 Haynes Street, Manchester, CT 06040  
March 16, 2009

**RE: Bill No. 839, an Act Concerning Mergers and Consolidations of Various State Agencies**

Good Morning, Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. I am Ardith Crampton, Manager of Eastern Connecticut Health Network's Family Development Center and Nurturing Families Network. I am here today to support the Children's Trust Fund and its status in administering the Nurturing Families Network and other prevention programs.

Nurturing Families Network has been saving families and saving Connecticut money for over ten years. Providing voluntary, intensive home visiting, education and case management to high-risk, first-time parents, identified before they leave the hospital, has reduced the rate of child abuse and neglect in this population from an expected 20% - 25% to an average of 3%. That's a lot of families who will not require DCF services and a lot of children who will not enter the child protective service system.

The Children's Trust Fund knows how to run a successful prevention program. They have run Nurturing Families Network successfully for over ten years, and they have run it with a meticulous system of evaluation, staff training/support and quality improvement. The Governor's budget proposes eliminating the Children's Trust Fund and transferring some of its programs to DCF. The typical profile of a NFN participant is: teen and/or single parent with dysfunctional family history, poor educational achievement, and minimal work history. It is unreasonable to believe that these vulnerable, probably frightened young parents would volunteer for a program associated with DCF. It implies that being young, possibly single, probably poor, automatically places them right on the path to the child welfare system. In fact, a frequently asked question of new parents offered the Nurturing Families Network program, is "Are you connected with DCF?" No, Nurturing Families Network and other prevention efforts belong in the Children's Trust Fund. It would be shameful to lose this "brain trust" of staff knowledge, experience, and success, and move proven prevention efforts to DCF, an agency already overburdened with families for whom support, education and prevention have come too late.